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TAGS: [OVIP](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CVIS](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: KUWAITI SPEAKER TELLS CODEL PELOSI DIALOGUE WITH IRAN/SYRIA KEY TO REGIONAL STABILITY

REF: 06 KUWAIT 4612

Classified By: CDA Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: During a January 25 meeting with Kuwaiti Speaker of Parliament Jassem Al-Khorafi, Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah, and Deputy Speaker Dr. Mohammed Al-Bousairi, CODEL Pelosi expressed gratitude for Kuwait's support for OIF and emphasized the importance to the U.S. of its bilateral relationship with Kuwait. Al-Khorafi urged the U.S. to talk to Syria and Iran in order to resolve regional conflicts. He claimed the U.S. would be surprised at how willing the Iranians would be to engage in such a dialogue. On Iraq, the Speaker argued that the key to stability was giving the Iraqis more responsibility for security. He said resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would also help bring stability to Iraq. Al-Khorafi urged the U.S. to be persistent in finding a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and not to let negotiations get derailed by groups seeking to undermine the peace process. The Speaker complained that several Kuwaiti MPs had been denied visas to the U.S. and asked for information on which ones were likely to be refused so he could advise them not to apply. He also expressed disappointment that the four Kuwaitis still at Guantanamo had yet to be returned. More broadly, he said that while Kuwaitis will never forget what the United States did for them, alleged abuses at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib "embarrass us as your friends" and make it difficult to defend U.S. policies. Speaker Pelosi said she hoped Al-Khorafi would visit Washington in the near future. End summary.

¶2. (C/NF) On January 25, CODEL Pelosi meet with Kuwaiti Speaker of Parliament Jassem Al-Khorafi, Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and Deputy Speaker Dr. Mohammed Al-Bousairi at Al-Khorafi's private residence. Accompanying Speaker Nancy Pelosi to the meeting were Rep. Ike Skelton, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee; Rep. Tom Lantos, Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Rep. Silvestre Reyes, Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; Rep. John Murtha; Rep. Nita Lowey; Rep. David Hobson; and several committee staff members. Speaker Pelosi expressed the delegation's gratitude for Kuwait's support and emphasized the United States' enduring commitment to and value for its close bilateral relationship with Kuwait. Al-Khorafi thanked the Speaker and congratulated her on becoming the first female Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. He also expressed hope that more U.S. Congressional delegations would visit Kuwait, noting the importance of people-to-people relations in addition to government-to-government relations.

U.S. Should Talk to Iran and Syria

¶3. (C/NF) Commenting on Iraq, Lebanon, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Al-Khorafi repeatedly stressed the importance of talking to all parties involved, particularly Iran and Syria, in order to find a solution. "Solving these problems unilaterally is not sufficient," he argued. With regard to Iraq, he said Iran and Syria were "playing an important role in irritating the U.S. because they have other problems with the U.S. that have nothing to do with Iraq." He believed the U.S. should get Syria and Iran to play a more productive role in resolving the conflict. Noting his recent meeting with Ahmadinejad (reftel), Al-Khorafi claimed Iran wanted stability in Iraq and argued that the U.S. would be surprised at how willing Iran would be to start such a dialogue.

¶4. (C/NF) The Speaker said he was "glad" (Iraqi President) Jalal Talabani visited Syria and expressed hope Talabani would also visit Iran in the near future. (Comment: He appeared unaware that Talabani has visited Iran. End Comment.) Al-Khorafi added that he was encouraged by reports of contacts between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which he hoped would continue and expand, and noted that meetings between the U.S. and Gulf countries were also important. He suggested America's allies in the region who have relations with Iran and Syria could potentially serve as intermediaries. Al-Khorafi characterized Kuwait's relations with Iran as "very strong"; the Foreign Minister was less enthusiastic, saying, "They are correct."

¶5. (C/NF) Chairman Lantos said he had been repeatedly denied a visa to Iran and asked how there could be dialogue if Iran continued to deny visas to U.S. Representatives. Al-Khorafi noted that the U.S. had recently denied a visa to the Iranian

KUWAIT 00000124 002 OF 003

Speaker of Parliament to visit the UN, but stressed that this should not be an obstacle to dialogue. Speaker Pelosi noted that the Baker-Hamilton Committee had similarly recommended the U.S. talk to Syria and Iran about Iraq, a view she said was shared by "serious thinkers" in the U.S., but asked if the two countries were really serious about finding a solution to the conflict. On the nuclear issue, Al-Khorafi advised the U.S. to allow Iran to "save face." "If you bully them, they will hit back in an unproductive way," he concluded. Al-Khorafi stressed that he offered this advice "because we are friends" and said Kuwait would "never forget what you did for us" in the first Gulf War.

Iraq: Give Iraqis More Responsibility for Security

¶6. (C/NF) Al-Khorafi believed the key to stabilizing Iraq was to strengthen the Iraqi army and give it more responsibility for security. According to him, Iraqi forces can do a better job at securing areas than American forces, who should be stationed outside the cities and be ready to assist the Iraqis when needed. Al-Khorafi argued that resolving the conflict in Iraq was also linked to finding a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rep. Lowey stressed the U.S. commitment to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but asked how this would really prevent sectarian violence in Iraq or diminish Al-Qaeda's desire to attack the United States. She noted that American troops had been training Iraqi security forces for the last four years. Rep. Lowey argued that there must be a political solution to stop the sectarian violence and asked how countries in the region could play a more active role in finding a solution to the conflict in Iraq. Again, Al-Khorafi stressed the importance of talking to Iran and Syria.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: U.S. Must "Finish the Job"

¶7. (C/NF) Commenting on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,

Al-Khorafi expressed frustration that "a lot of our efforts are wasted because every time an agreement is reached, something always happens to bring us back to square one." He stressed the importance of engaging all the countries with a stake in the issue, most notably Syria and Iran, in order to find a solution. He urged the U.S. to be persistent and "finish the job," and not allow certain groups to derail the peace process. Chairman Lantos emphasized that terrorists were preventing the peace process from moving forward. The Speaker said that while he did not disagree, the policies pursued by Israel were contributing to the problem and the desperation of the Palestinian people. Rep. Lowey noted the difficulty of finding a solution when one of Hamas' stated goals was the destruction of Israel. She expressed hope, however, that moderate Palestinian leaders, like President Mahmoud Abbas, would be strengthened.

¶8. (C/NF) Speaker Pelosi said she did not understand why Arab governments had never unequivocally condemned suicide bombings when they clearly violated Islamic principles and undermined regional peace. Al-Khorafi noted that Kuwait had been the victim of terrorist attacks and had taken a strong stand against terrorism. He emphasized, however, that "to fight terrorism, you must address (its) root causes. It is not sufficient to say you are against it." Al-Khorafi cited as an example the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where he said the Palestinians "have nothing left to lose." He argued that cutting off aid to the Palestinian government after Hamas' election aggravated the problem and criticized the Israelis for arresting the Palestinian Speaker. Al-Khorafi claimed Kuwait was putting pressure on both Hamas and Fatah to reach a compromise, but complained that Israel's policies were making things more difficult for Abbas. He said it was important to help Abbas and warned of the danger of him being replaced by someone less moderate. "You should tell the Israelis not to embarrass (Palestinian) moderates, like Abbas," he said.

Rejection of MPs' Visas a Sore Point

¶9. (C/NF) The Speaker complained that several Kuwaiti parliamentarians (MPs) were denied visas. (Note: There has not been a recent denial of a visa for an MP, though two MPs have experienced long delays for Security Advisor Opinions (SAOs) and these cases remain pending. End note.) While agreeing that the U.S. had the right to deny visas to whoever it wished, Al-Khorafi expressed frustration that he had not

KUWAIT 00000124 003 OF 003

been provided with information on which MPs were likely to be refused. "We just want to know who among the 50 MPs is not welcome (in the U.S.) so we can tell them not to apply and save them the embarrassment of being denied," he explained. The Speaker said what was particularly bewildering was that some of the MPs who were denied visas met regularly with Emboffs and were invited to Embassy functions. Chairman Lantos said Kuwait was a good friend and Kuwaitis were welcome in the U.S., but argued that visas were denied for valid reasons and were not arbitrary decisions.

Disappointed Gitmo Detainees Not Yet Returned

¶10. (C/NF) Al-Khorafi raised the issue of the four remaining Kuwaiti citizens held at Guantanamo. He said Kuwaitis had hoped they would be returned after the Amir's visit to Washington in September, but were so far disappointed. More broadly, the Speaker argued that alleged abuses at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib "embarrass us as your friends" and make it difficult to defend U.S. policies. Rep. Murtha asked if the closure of Guantanamo or the demolition of Abu Ghraib would be the type of dramatic action necessary to convince regional allies and the international community that the U.S. was serious about peace and stability. The Speaker responded that the U.S. fails to apply the public relations principles

it taught to Kuwaitis and others in the region.

¶11. (U) Speaker Pelosi and her delegation did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.

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